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NEWS RELEASE

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State's SAT Scores Rise by 7 Points, Largest Increase Among the New England States

Rhode Island's high-school students scored 504 on the SAT I Verbal and 503 on the SAT I Mathematics tests given in 2002, representing a one-year increase of 3 points on the verbal test and 4 points on the mathematics test.

These scores make for the largest one-year increase among the New England states and the largest increase among any state where at least 60 percent of the eligible students take the SAT.

Over a five-year span, Rhode Island's scores have increased by 15 points, again the highest increase among the New England states. This marks the second-highest five-year increase (North Carolina was the highest) among those states where 60 percent of the students take the SAT.

"I want to congratulate the students, teachers, and administrators throughout our schools," said Peter McWalters, the commissioner of elementary and secondary education. "During the past five years, our high schools have begun to implement a standards-based curriculum and have established higher expectations for their students. We're beginning to see the positive results of these changes."

"I'm delighted at this good news regarding the state's SAT scores," said James A. DiPrete, chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. "The Regents are considering a series of high-school reform regulations, designed to increase literacy and to change the graduation requirements. As these reforms are put into practice, our scores will continue to improve in the coming years."

SAT scores nationwide (504 verbal; 516 mathematics) were level this year and have increased by 4 points over the past five years.

With 7,636 students taking the SAT, Rhode Island had a participation rate of 73 percent, tied for the 5th highest rate among all states. Last year, the participation rate in Rhode Island was 71 percent.

Among public-school students only, the scores in Rhode Island were 494 on the SAT I Verbal and 498 on the SAT I Mathematics tests. That represents an increase of 8 points since last year and 10 points over the past five years.

The SAT scores still show a gap between white and minority students, though the gap has been narrowing over the past five years. Scores of Asian students have increased by 43 points over the past five years. Scores of black students have increased by 16 points over five years but declined by one point this year. Scores of Hispanic students have declined by 10 points over five years but increased by 9 points this year.

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Among the state's best students—those ranked in the top 10 percent of their class—the scores were 604 verbal and 612 mathematics, which is 24 points higher than the top 10 percent of all students nationwide.

The SAT results were released by The College Board (www.collegeboard.com), of New York. Each test is scored on a scale of 200 to 800.

In addition, The College Board today released the results of the 2002 Advanced Placement Program (AP) tests. The results show that 67 percent of the examinations taken in the state received a passing grade (of 3, 4, or 5), compared with 63 percent nationwide. Among public-school students, 61 percent received passing grades in the state and nationwide.

Among the state's public high schools, 30 had at least 10 students taking AP examinations; 10 years ago, only 19 schools had at least 10 students taking the examinations.

The AP examination can lead to college credit or advanced placement in college courses for students who receive passing grades.

In other testing news, the ACT scores, primarily used for admission to colleges in the West and Midwest, have been released. Rhode Island had the same composite ACT score (21.9) as Massachusetts and was slightly higher than Connecticut, although the number of students tested in New England is too small to draw conclusions. Only 592 students in Rhode Island took the ACT test, which is scored on a scale with a maximum of 36 points.

Note: A list of the 2002 SAT scores grouped by school, public schools only, is attached. The scores in the two schools in which fewer than 10 students took the SAT have been hidden because the sample is so small that it might be possible to identify individual students.